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Practitioner applies 'resilience' concept to training America's Responders

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Practitioner applies ‘resilience’ concept to training America’s Responders



As a State Preparedness Official with the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness in Louisiana, Jerry Monier (MA 1105/1106) found that concepts and words used in the profession have more than just dictionary meanings, they can also affect how agencies and people operate.

Monier examined such a concept in his Center for Homeland Defense and Security thesis, “Clarifying Resilience in the Context of Homeland Security.” In early 2014, the thesis was added to the National Strategic Narrative, a website that provides academic backbone to policy decisions regarding investment, security, economic development, the environment, and community engagement to enhance national strategy.

[Download the paper: “Clarifying Resilience in the Context of Homeland Security”](#)

“Clarifying the concept of resilience is necessary to develop recommendations to address the “how to” of resilience in the homeland security enterprise,” wrote Monier, who presently serves as the Associate Director of Research and Development at Louisiana State University’s National Center for Biomedical Research and Training (NCBRT).

His CHDS research is being applied at the NCBRT, a Department of Homeland Security training partner, as Monier develops courses and training for first responders.

1) Monier said the catalyst for his thesis arose from the varied definitions and contexts of the resilience concept described in the evolution of emergency management and homeland security practices and policies.

The thesis tracks the origins of the concept in the engineering field through its absorption into social science to, more recently, the emergency management and homeland security lexicon. The paper further outlines how resilience has manifested itself in the history of manmade and natural threats impacting the United States. Monier suggests that each incident added subsequent insight into describing and realizing resilience.

With that base Monier identified ingredients of the resilience concept in the context of the homeland security enterprise, concluding that resilience is basically a vision for homeland security rather than a policy.

Further, the research examines the resilience concept as it appears in myriad policies emanating from various agencies and departments of the federal government.

The paper concludes with recommendations to develop and deliver resilience training curriculum that would emphasize the concept, something that is as important at the practitioner level as it is in the academic realm.

“Strengthening resilience requires that homeland security practitioners and academics clearly understand the concept,” Monier wrote. “The clarification, introduction, and application of the proposed definition of resilience offer the homeland security practitioner a way to navigate and explore the complexities of the homeland.”

2) His research changed his view of homeland security in a way unrelated to resilience.

“At the conclusion of my research not only did I understand resilience in the context of homeland security, but I had a clearer understanding of complexity and how different systems interact with one another,” Monier observed. “The concept of resilience I put forward is resilience is based on a synthesis of our interactions, experiences and complexity. I think that vision of resilience frames how we look at things.”

For example, Louisiana has weathered numerous hurricanes, each one strengthening the resilience of individuals,

the private sector and government. Lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina improved response /resilience of these systems when Hurricane Gustav battered the state in 2008 and further influenced how residents and government responded to and continue to deal with the effects of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in 2010.

“Either knowingly or unknowingly we continually build resilience cycles. These cycles have been influenced by the interactions, experiences and complexities of events occurring in Louisiana’s recent history,” Monier said.

3) In developing his thesis, Monier utilized a pragmatic approach to evaluating the various concepts, definitions and approaches to understanding resilience. This approach was based William J. Ball’s research titled “A Pragmatic Framework for the Evaluation of Policy Arguments”. Monier also devised a process he has termed the CIA principle “Clarify, Introduce and Apply.” He proposes that to understand a public policy issue we must first clarify the issue; be able to introduce the issue to non-practitioners; and finally apply the results to enhance the capabilities of the practitioner.

That latter approach helps build the foundation to train or educate practitioners on the concept, such as a “Resilience 101” course introducing the basics of resilience with an eye toward subsequent classes on the topic. Further course recommendations in the thesis include incorporating resilience lessons into existing practitioner based training curriculum as well as integrating it into future courses.

The thesis provides a resource beneficial to Monier’s work at LSU’s National Center for Biomedical Research and Training.

“As a DHS training partner we are developing or recertifying performance, awareness or management level training courses for first responders and practitioners,” Monier said. “Especially with new courses, we must be able to clarify what the ‘true’ training need is, we then introduce the training need and we then apply a solution through our course development process.”

Monier was part of a featured panel discussion at Preventive Medicine 2014, a conference hosted by the American College for Preventative Medicine. Monier spoke on resilience from the perspective of a responder and planner to Hurricane Katrina.

His thesis has also been included in the A National Strategic Narrative website at:

<http://nationalstrategicnarrative.org/read/research/>

Associated file: [Clarifying Resilience in the Context of Homeland Security](#)

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